STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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REGIONAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS IN THE EAST ASIA REGION

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REGIONAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS IN THE EAST ASIA REGION

'REGIONALISM' ON THE RISE?

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ABSTRACT

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East Asia, whilst an area of increasing global economic importance, remains a region of tension. Regional security challenges include transnational threats, territorial disputes and the threatened use of weapons of mass destruction, all of which challenge the stability essential to sustain economic development.

Regional cooperation, particularly security cooperation, continues to develop through fora such as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Both are critical to effective multilateralism in the region but must overcome the dual handicaps of ineffective regional leadership and the 'ASEAN' way if they are to contribute to regional stability and continued East Asian and global economic development.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iii

PREFACE vii

REGIONAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS IN THE EAST ASIA REGION 1

Security Options and Lessons from the Past 2

Regional Notion of 'Security' 3

Promising Opportunities? 6

Regional Security Challenges 8

What Chance an Effective South East Asian Security Arrangement? 9

Where To From Here? 13

Conclusion 14

ENDNOTES 17

BIBLIOGRAPHY 23

PREFACE

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REGIONAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS IN THE EAST ASIA REGION

'Regionalism' on the Rise?

The end of the Cold War has reinforced the concept of 'regionalisation' and the expectation that security issues will be addressed, initially at least, on a regional basis[1]. This notion has been reinforced by the selectivity exercised by the United States (US), as the remaining global superpower, in intervening to resolve often violent and bloody crises across the world[2]. Whilst this notion predates the end of the Cold War, it is now more evident that regional self-responsibility is expected in the first instance given that a strategy of 'containment' no longer shapes global US involvement. It is clear that a regional approach to resolving problems, based upon a collective or multilateral mechanism, is certainly the way of the present and increasingly, the future[3] for it vests responsibility in local actors whose interests are most threatened[4].

This regional approach is evident in East Asia[5], and especially South East Asia, with the establishment of organizations such as the Association of South East Asian Nations[6] (ASEAN) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum to address regional issues. This particular regional approach is of global significance, given the extra-regional recognition of Asia's importance to the world economy and stability throughout most of the next century[7], noting not only its economic potential but also its history of conflict and current tensions[8]. The geostrategic importance of the region[9], combined with the roles the US, Japan and China play in the region, emphasises this significance. Importantly, this is recognised most strongly by ASEAN member nations themselves in their ASEAN Vision 2020[10] document, which acknowledges the need to organise for mutual betterment.

The importance of a regional grouping in East and South East Asia as a means of addressing regional security challenges is well recognised given the gravity of the challenges faced in the region. These include continuing economic development after the lapse due to the 1997 Asian financial crisis, dealing with an emergent China looking to extend its regional influence and 'flashpoints' that currently exist between China and Taiwan and on the Korean Peninsula. Nations in the region also have to deal with the rise of transnational issues such as refugees, crime and regional environmental degradation. These challenges are complex, many are long-standing, most have global implications and all have the potential to destabilise a region important to global economic development and peace.

The concept of 'regional responsibility' is certainly maturing in the East Asia region through fora such as ASEAN and APEC. The question then is whether these developing fora are capable of meeting the demands of the 21st Century as they must be capable of dealing with both long-standing and complex challenges, a range of increasingly complex transnational issues and crises that arise at short notice.

The aim of this paper therefore is to consider whether the extant fora have the potential to develop into an effective security oriented forum capable of meeting the challenges of the region.

Security Options and Lessons from the Past

Experiences with collective security mechanisms in the recent past in East Asia and particularly South East Asia have generally been less than successful. It is useful to examine the recent past because this experience provides an insight into the region's approach towards collective security arrangements. It also highlights the nature of the extant arrangements and the way cooperation, particularly security cooperation, is effected.

The establishment of the South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in 1955 was as a product of the US strategic policy of containment of the then Soviet Union. It provided the Eisenhower Administration the opportunity to intervene in the region to meet its national interests and the Administration largely assumed SEATO would meet the interests of regional member nations[11]. SEATO was in reality the 'overlaying' of a Western security model onto a culturally different region that was exiting the colonial era. The Alliance was established on a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) model, where direct confrontation was the threat, whereas in Asia, subversion was the challenge[12]. Direct external threat was not a regional motivation as in Europe. There was no real empathy amongst East Asian member nations for the Alliance because it did not meet the regional need – the internal dimension to security. Given this, the very fact that the regional nations sought to use SEATO as a conduit for economic aid[13] provides an invaluable insight into needs that were neither recognised nor met.

The SEATO experience highlighted the core security issue for the region – that strength and stability are derived from economic development and prosperity, as social betterment is recognised as the means by which regional threats are most effectively countered[14]. This lesson is important when considering security concepts and models in East Asia and particularly in South East Asia. It provides clear evidence that successful security arrangements need to be tailored to meet the regional need and not the national interests of major powers with regional interests.

Whilst SEATO was an imposed security mechanism that ultimately failed through its impotence[15], the extant Five Power Defence Agreements (FPDA)[16], established in 1971, developed out of a regional need and is serving an ever more useful role in facilitating regional engagement. FPDA was established to address the security of Malaysia and Singapore following the withdrawal of Commonwealth forces from the region in light of fears of an expansionist Vietnam and uncertainty regarding Indonesia's regional policies in the post-Confrontation[17] period. The Agreements are based upon consultation between the Five Powers in the event of an external threat to either Malaysia or Singapore. Whilst initially moribund,

the FPDA has become increasingly active, largely through a program of military exercises that supplements the Integrated Air Defence System (IADS)[18] operating over that portion of the region.

The FPDA developed from a regional need and has matured over time, meeting regional requirements. It can be argued that SEATO, because it did not meet the regional need at inception, would have been unlikely to have matured to something akin to the FPDA because it lacked that initial impetus gained from regional acceptance and support. SEATO did not have the potential to develop in the style of FPDA, which has remained consultative and inclusive; a key requirement of any successful regional grouping in East Asia, and a major factor in the success of this particular arrangement.

While not overly significant in a truly regional security sense, the FPDA reflects the type of arrangement sought through SEATO. It is one where sub-regional rather than extra-regional interests dominate the arrangement. It is also significant that FPDA has facilitated regional engagement and consequently transparency of military capability through a habit of dialogue and engagement, and an appreciation that military forces can be used to deal with regional transnational issues. While FPDA is currently hampered by poor relations between Malaysia and Singapore, the success of FPDA has shown that regional sensitivities and characteristics can be accommodated when shaping a regional body to achieve cooperation in East Asia.

The regional experience with security mechanisms understandably gives rise to pessimism, notwithstanding the lessons of FPDA. SEATO failed because it was an imposed regime, was not tailored to the threats to the region and never effectively achieved unity of purpose with its participants. Nor did it reflect regional needs or expectations. Conversely and notwithstanding current differences between two partners, FPDA has been a security mechanism tailored to meet a regional need, albeit, a quite narrow one, that continues to mature to bring regional benefits beyond those perhaps originally envisioned by its architects. The lesson here is that any security mechanism must be more 'FPDA style'; based on consultation, be desired by the participants, tailored to meet needs and expectations and be sufficiently flexible to grow with expanding requirements, both of participant nations and the region. It is clear therefore that the East Asian notion of security is significantly different from that of the West and is driven by culture and history. With this experience in mind, it is appropriate to outline contemporary notions of security as they apply to the region in order to establish the basis for assessing the potential of current and future security arrangements.

Regional Notion of 'Security'

To date, security has been defined in terms of the ability to defend against an external threat[19], but this has been deemed inadequate when considering the nature of the East Asian environment. The regional

notion of security has a historically based internal dimension that shapes the manner in which governance is delivered to a nation[20], and is driven by the historical imperative of maintaining the dominance of a ruling elite. The regional approach to security therefore focuses sharply on this internal dimension and this, to a degree, 'binds' regional neighbours to a relatively common approach quite different from the Western, external threat-based model. Consequently, regionally oriented concepts have been developed which accommodate this particular characteristic and so reflect the nature of the relationships between nations and between the ruling authorities and 'their people'. The contemporary concepts of comprehensive, common and cooperative security warrant examination in order to determine whether regional, security-based arrangements will adequately accommodate the East Asian need and be capable of meeting the challenges faced in the region.

The concept of 'comprehensive security' is well established in the region and supports a ruling elite's arrangements to ensure national cohesion[21] and in turn their longevity. It recognises that national security has non-military dimensions. In East Asia, national security has an element of introspection that recognises domestic and non-military threats including subversion, separatism and economic uncertainty. The concept also accommodates transnational issues that are clear threats such as drug addiction, illegal immigrants, refugee flows and racial and religious based dangers as threats to national integrity. This concept thus acknowledges the notion of 'self reliance', that is the need for a nation to deal with both external and internal threats and sees nations with common interests cooperate to deal with issues that have regional impacts and hence the potential to affect regional peace and stability.

It is possible to appreciate the development of a 'regional resilience' manifested as a collective regional 'prickliness' regarding external, and in particular Western, intrusion and interference into what are regarded as regional issues. This 'prickliness' has developed into a defacto policy, perhaps reflective of rising nationalism and regionalism due to this growing 'self reliance', and the notion that East Asia is capable of looking after its regional issues. This notion therefore provides the opportunity to recognise and act upon the impacts of transnational issues upon the region, and with this notion of regional resilience, the opportunity to advance multilateralism in the region.

The concept of 'common security' reflects an inclusive approach to security in the region and is based upon the notion of 'security with..' rather than the deterrence based 'security against..' construct. It recognises differences between nations but strives for inclusiveness in an attempt to gather and focus sometimes competitor nations in recognition of the need for understanding and compromise. This concept has been effectively applied in Europe through the Conference for Security Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and recently, was proposed as a model that could be applied in East Asia[22] because it has been based upon consultation and consensus building, thus emphasising the 'security with...' element of this concept. Although the essence of the 'common security' CSCE model was accepted and

this consultation process has already become the basis of regional relationships, the CSCE model was rejected in the whole. This approach acknowledges the key tenet of regional cooperation whilst highlighting this regional 'prickliness' as reflective of a growing sense of regional identity and independence. It also highlights an unwillingness to accept what is seen as an attempt to impose a European model on Asia[23], reminiscent perhaps of the SEATO experience, and emphasises the need to devise security constructs that reflect the nature of the region.

The last security concept of interest is 'cooperative security', which was proposed in 1990 at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly[24]. It reflects a more gradual approach to developing multilateral institutions and recognises the importance of both extant bilateral relationships and balance-of-power arrangements currently practiced in the region[25]. This concept has the potential to facilitate the development of multilateralism over time, through steady progress towards trust, cooperation and transparency achieved through a habit of dialogue. This concept is largely a refinement of both previous concepts but acknowledges both regional identity issues and that responsibility for the pace of development of such an arrangement must rest with the regional nations who claim responsibility for regional security.

This particular concept recognises the need for nations to think 'comprehensively', act 'collectively' and develop a multilateral framework 'cooperatively', reflecting the nature of the region and a history that includes competitor nations. The concept establishes a construct in East Asia whereby small and middle powers can execute an increasingly important role in shaping the nature of a globally significant region at a time where international power structures are becoming increasingly diffuse. Cooperative security, through the consultative mechanism, has the additional advantage of being able to deal with the increasing range of transnational threats that potentially affect many regional nations, as well as accommodate the non-state actors that increasingly seek roles in governance. ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), with its enlarged group of dialogue partners, have used this particular model and been successful in moderating behavior[26], bringing previously hostile partners together and engaging them in collective discussion[27]. The disadvantage of this model though is that the loose, consultative approach, combined with a clear desire to avoid tension caused by comment on another's internal matters, generally means little other than consultation is really achieved. The diversity of views and interests of participants, the overwhelming strength of bilateral relationships and a general regional unwillingness to comment on others' internal problems are major obstacles to the establishment of an effective collective security mechanism for the region.

Whilst there was less than full support for a European style security model, it is evident that the East Asian experience is seeing regional nations, particularly South East Asian nations, drift towards a consultative, inclusive type of consensus-based arrangement. Clearly, there is utility in this approach, as

seen in both ASEAN and the ARF. However it is useful to review the major regional bodies, with Asian notions of security in mind, in order to develop an appreciation as to whether they may be able to meet the regional security challenges.

Promising Opportunities?

The post colonial era, and in particular the post South East Asian conflict period, has seen the development of ASEAN and the ARF as regional groupings focussed on effecting regional development and stability. Whilst other groupings such as APEC exist, ASEAN, and in particular the ARF, are seen by many commentators as key to regional security and perhaps the basis upon which a multilateral, 'cooperative security' model may be established.

ASEAN was formed in 1967 to promote political and economic cooperation between Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and the then South Vietnam. This vision was expanded in 1976 when the principles of peace and cooperation were formalised. Subsequently Brunei, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar have been admitted as members. Through this grouping, ASEAN commands far greater influence on trade and security related issues than could be effected by individual member nations and this influence has been achieved through consultation, consensus and cooperation[28]. As Rodolfo Severino, the ASEAN Secretary General, has emphasised, ASEAN is not an equivalent to a European Community but rather a consensus based association that operates without supranational institutions[29]. This emphasis is instructive when reflecting on the contemporary notions of security and the extent to which regional nations are willing to embrace multilateralism.

ASEAN expanded its dialogue with regional partners and nations with interests in the region and established the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994 to discuss regional security concerns. This was the first multilateral forum for government level consultation on Asia-Pacific regional security matters and has to date, focussed on confidence building measures, defence transparency and peacekeeping cooperation. ASEAN foreign ministers meet annually and the ARF meets with its dialogue partners for a post-ministerial conference. There are up to 260 sub-dialogue and committee meetings[30] during each year as well as regular bilateral meetings with dialogue partners focussed on again, consultation, achieving consensus and cooperation[31].

With ASEAN and the ARF exists APEC, a forum established in 1989 focussed on economic growth in the increasingly interdependent Asia-Pacific region. APEC has grown from an informal association of 12 Pacific Rim nations to a major regional economic institution. Whilst primarily an economic grouping, the utility of such a forum is evident; in 1999 regional leaders used the forum to discuss the East Timor situation prior to UN action to resolve the crisis.

Most regional nations, whether ASEAN, ARF or APEC members or associates acknowledge the utility and importance of extant mechanisms to facilitate consultation, consensus and cooperation. The US recognises the importance of such mechanisms and habits of dialogue[32]. This importance has been emphasised by US Secretary of Defence Cohen, who has acknowledged that ASEAN has become a 'multifaceted power centre in its own right, one integral to the entire Asia-Pacific'[33]. He has optimistically noted that ASEAN has distinguished itself by addressing issues such as Cambodia and the South China Sea, facilitated regional dialogue including three decades of problem solving and notes this bodes well for the future[34].

There are other multi-lateral channels addressing regional issues of significance. These include trilateral dialogues between the US, China and Japan and the US, South Korea and Japan as well as four-party talks on the Korean Peninsula issue[35]. These arrangements all focus on regional security issues, and certainly hint at the limitations of bodies such as ASEAN and the ARF, highlighting in particular the difficulty of a sub-regional grouping effectively participating in issues that involve major, extra-regional and emergent powers such as the US, Japan and China. They also reflect the challenges these organisations face in shaping the environment in which they must exist, particularly when these issues have global consequences.

Fora do exist whereby East Asian security issues can and are addressed by both involved and interested parties, although the process focuses on discussion and consensus building and outcomes are shaped by the size and composition of the membership. It is worthy to note that the increasing size of these fora often makes it difficult to achieve consensus because the diversity of views[36] results in dilution of the intensity of an issue[37] and achievement of a result that inevitably is a less than adequate compromise. This diversity also requires new members views to be accommodated[38], with obvious effect on the overall regional position. This is increasingly important when non-democratic nations join a grouping and the effect of the shift in 'style' on decision-making is noteworthy[39] particularly when considering security issues. Burma/Myanmar present particular challenges in this area.

Fora are increasingly being used to facilitate discussion on topics beyond the scope of the particular grouping. Whilst APEC was used to prompt discussion on East Timor, it subsequently attracted criticism for not focussing on its key and critical role – economic relations in the Asia-Pacific region[40]. This 'hijacking' detracted from the primary focus of that particular organisation and in this case, from both ASEAN and the ARF as well, both of which have responsibility for such issues. The 'opportunity use' of APEC to address the East Timor crisis and the inclusion of ASEAN foreign ministers at that meeting certainly reflects on the efficacy of ASEAN and its ability to resolve regional issues.

It is clear much has been achieved in developing effective cooperation tools through ASEAN, the ARF, APEC and the other multi-lateral mechanisms devised to address what are significant issues in East Asia. These mechanisms are inclusive, recognise the sovereignty of member states and seek consultation, consensus and cooperation through dialogue and transparency. Accepting that ASEAN has a largely South East Asian focus and that APEC is an economic development based grouping, it is appropriate to focus on the potential for the ARF to develop into an effective truly regional security mechanism. The ARF has the charter to address regional security issues by both nations in the region and nations with a key stake in regional peace and stability. The balance of power politics being exercised in the region by the US, Japan and China would not facilitate the establishment of another body, nor would regional nations, when there is the chance that extra-regional interests may skew the focus of what is essentially a regional body. Further, it has taken time to establish the current level of interaction under the extant arrangement, so a 'rebalanced' or restructured security mechanism would require some time to develop the degree of confidence and trust found in the ARF and its processes, even given progress to date.

It is necessary now though to briefly outline the security challenges faced in East Asia before identifying the limitations to the effectiveness of ASEAN and the ARF and consider the potential they have to manage regional security in East Asia.

Regional Security Challenges

The East Asia region is faced with significant challenges both now and in the foreseeable future, at a time when there is increasing indifference to global affairs in the US[41], whose very presence stabilises the region. The challenges include recovery from the 1997 Asian economic crisis, perhaps the most important threat given the regional view that security is based largely upon economic well being. Challenges also include concern over an emergent China that is undergoing an ambitious program of modernisation of the Peoples Liberation Army[42], and that is party to a number of territorial disputes that include the Spratly Islands[43]. The future role of Japan in the region is considered a threat, by some, to the stability and security of the region, as is the continued tension on the Korean Peninsula. The increasing range of transnational issues affecting nations in the region include refugee flows resulting from sub-regional or intra-state conflict, increased environmental degradation caused by unsustainable development practices and crime, all of which have the potential to heighten tension and threaten stability. The region is also subject to internal political threats to stability, as nations and leader personalities are in themselves often destabilising influences.

These challenges, through their longevity, the power of the state actors and the potential global implications, combined with the external influence of the US, make resolution through a regional body

problematic. Continuing economic development is an extra-regional issue, with economic reconstruction being conducted with the assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Resolution of the Spratly Islands territorial dispute is complicated by the number of the claimants, the regional 'weight' of China and the de facto 'occupation' of several of the reefs in the Island area by a number of claimant nations. The Chinese concern for a strengthening Japan closely tied with the US in both economic and defence matters, challenges, in the former's mind at least, the stability and well being in the region. The tension on the Korean Peninsula is a long-standing issue of global significance and warrants such level of attention.

The increasing range of transnational issues involves many regional nations and includes international crime, refugee flow, drug trafficking and the effects of unsustainable environmental practices[44]. These challenges require a consultative, cooperative approach that may well impinge on sovereignty issues of participating nations and challenge the 'Asian' or 'ASEAN way' of not commenting on another's' internal affairs. Tied with this notion also is the challenge of nations seeking regional leadership and the expectation by some regional leaders of a leadership role in any enhanced multilateral, regional security arrangement.

The question therefore is whether a regional security arrangement[45], such as the ARF, can address problems of this magnitude and achieve an effective outcome.

What Chance an Effective South East Asian Security Arrangement?

Regional security concerns can be overcome if the participants agree to use an appropriate security mechanism to resolve differences and agree to be bound by cooperative agreements. This is predicated upon the security mechanism being recognised as a credible and effective forum by which to address such important issues. With this premise, it is important to recognise the ARF is a product of regional experience in collective security arrangements, the regional notion of security and the region's cultural character. Looking forward then, there are two strategic obstacles to establishing an enhanced regional multilateralism that can capably address security challenges for the region; leadership and the 'Asian' or ASEAN way.

Leadership

The nature of the East Asian region, with its history of tension and conflict, colonialism both from without and within the region, the relationships between the US, Japan and China and China as an emergent power and regional force makes leadership in the region a fundamental issue for East Asia. Effective regional security cooperation will be predicated upon effective leadership and this remains a vexing issue

with the ARF. This issue has both external and internal dimensions, with extra-regional interests and balance of power politics complicated by the expectation of leadership by a regional nation.

The engagement by ASEAN of major regional participants, particularly the US and China as dialogue partners, in the ARF has complicated the regional leadership issue. ASEAN has the dilemma of reconciling competing requirements - it seeks a distinctly Asian grouping that includes China, yet recognises the need for extra-regional influence by the US in regional affairs[46] as an important factor in regional stability[47], particularly to counter the growing influence of China. This dilemma was well illustrated recently by a senior Indonesian bureaucrat who stated the region wanted 'the US on tap, not on top'[48]. ASEAN seeks to retain leadership and control of the ARF yet is unable to match the influence of these and other ARF participants[49]. ASEAN and ARF leadership may certainly be attractive to an emergent China, which is steadily extending its influence and presence[50] through the region. The US though will remain unwilling to devolve responsibility for issues of global significance to a regional forum over which it may have limited influence because of the nature of its relationship with an emergent China. The US also sees ASEAN needing to release control of the ARF because of the relatively diminished influence it has in the region[51], the importance of US regional interests and the security concerns in East Asia.

ASEAN may be unable to reconcile these conflicting demands. If so, the ARF will remain largely ineffective and ASEAN little more than a sub-regional grouping seeking relevance in a region of global import. On this level therefore, it appears unlikely there can be any consensus and so the tension between leadership expectations and extra-regional interests will hamper ARF development.

The competition for leadership amongst sub-regional nations within ASEAN has created regional tension not conducive to collective development. Competition between Indonesia and Malaysia[52] for pre-eminence in ASEAN has been a distraction, and as a consequence of the fall of Suharto and the serious internal conflict across Indonesia, Malaysia, through Mohammed Mahathir, has assumed the mantle of de facto regional leader. This is amply reflected in his recent comments questioning the utility of the previously sacrosanct ASEAN principle of not commenting on another member nation's internal affairs[53] as well as his recent and forceful comments concerning the negative Western influence on East Timor issues[54]. Given Malaysia may look to become a sub-regional leader in an ASEAN and ARF construct, this is only part solution to the leadership question that must be resolved in order to facilitate regional advancement.

Given the balance of power politics issue between China and the US, the 'ASEAN Vision 2020' effectively provides a sub-regional view on the likely development of the ARF and to some degree clarifies, in the short term, the regional leadership issue. Whilst the ARF plan has three stages of development, the first

two being establishment of confidence-building and then preventative diplomacy measures[55], the ASEAN Vision 2020 does not represent the ARF Stage 3 objective of a conflict resolution mechanism as a part of the Vision[56]. This exclusion can lead to a number of disconcerting conclusions. Firstly and simply, ASEAN members and the other nations with a regional interest are not prepared to move to this vital last phase because they cannot agree to the focus, structure, membership and process for such a mechanism because it means potentially deleterious decisions regarding their role and prestige in the region. Alternately, until ASEAN has demonstrated its capability, particularly after its poor performance in the recent Financial Crisis, transition to Stage 3, however appropriate and necessary, is not a regional objective until after 2020. Lastly and perhaps most likely, ASEAN fear of loss of control of such an important mechanism, notwithstanding the global implications of some of the causes of regional tension, means this requirement will be put aside until ASEAN is able to effectively develop and manage the issue. This inertia is a major obstacle to the development of the ARF and as such, is genuinely disadvantageous to the region.

The difficulty in developing a leadership solution that reconciles regional and extra-regional interests and the need for East Asian nations to recognise the differing views on the way ahead between ASEAN and the ARF present fundamental challenges for the region, as does the ARF's limited influence. These and local leadership aspirations will preclude the establishment of effective regional leadership and so the ability to deal with the very significant security challenges faced by the region.

Asian Way

The other strategic challenge the ARF must overcome in order to achieve effectiveness and enhance credibility is the 'Asian' or ASEAN way enunciated in the principle of non-interference in another nation's affairs. This principle has been key in the development of ASEAN and the ARF and the establishment of habits of dialogue between the region's nations. These habits need to be expanded to facilitate the more robust interaction required for effective conflict resolution amongst the ARF participants group.

The ARF operates in the 'Asian' or 'ASEAN' way as reflected in the concept of cooperative security and as this consensus has been built, the ARF has attracted criticism because it allegedly has few tangible achievements. Given the relative immaturity of the ARF and the nature of the region, this is unfair criticism because this consultative process which was started just over six years ago now involves members from one of the world's most conflict prone regions[57].

ASEAN and the ARF's achievements are significant, but are reflective of the initial need to establish the basis for multilateralism. Effort to date has been focussed on the establishment of a mechanism, that when matured, will ideally be capable of dealing with regional issues. For instance, there is no history of

institutionalised regional security cooperation in the form of the ARF in this politically and geographically diverse grouping of states that form a region noted for conflict and tension. It is worth noting that in this formative period, the ARF has managed to cope with regional power-balance shifts, with the decline of Russia, the rise of China and the US drawdown from parts of the region[58]. The ARF has perhaps most importantly, provided the opportunity for many of the small, regional nations to meet with the major powers and seek resolution of outstanding issues in a way not previously available in the region. These are significant achievements given the regional approach to security, the history of intra-regional tension and suspicion and the recently shifting power balance.

The discussion protocols established in this 'way' have been critical in advancing the first two stages of the ARF plan; the development of confidence building measures and preventative diplomacy. They are however inadequate to support the more challenging conflict resolution requirements, where discussion must clearly address causes of conflict and so potentially result in criticism of a member nation. This currently is an anathema to ASEAN and the ARF but if 'causes and regional effects' are to be the basis of conflict identification and resolution, as may include the sanctioning of a nation, this obstacle must be overcome. With this current 'way', the concept of sovereignty is recognised for its importance in the postcolonial era. Development of the current discussion protocol to facilitate more robust engagement support will involve some breach of the previously sacrosanct principle and may well involve a loss of 'face' and hence prestige in the region. It will certainly require recognition that it may be necessary for every nation at some time to accept criticism for its action over some issue and all need to be prepared to collectively submit to what currently could be considered an indignity.

In 1998, the new Thai Foreign Minister proposed that discussion become more robust along the lines discussed above but his proposal was dismissed[59], regrettably perhaps because he was new to the ASEAN process and relatively junior amongst his peers[60]. Whilst these comments were stimulated by criticism of ASEAN's inability to act to resolve the Asian Financial Crisis, there is an understanding that ASEAN and consequently the ARF needs revitalisation. This has been initiated by Malaysia's Mohammed Mahathir, who recently called for a 'refined regional security structure' involving 'every Asian nation'. This suggestion will ensure the region retains carriage of regional issues, and importantly, avoids Western involvement[61] and whilst not directly connected, implies acceptance of the 1998 Thai proposal for a more robust interaction in dealing with regional affairs. Non-acceptance of the Thai proposal and adherence to the current protocol will certainly render Prime Minister Mahathir's proposal unworkable, an outcome he, as de facto regional spokesman and leader, may be unlikely to accept. Consequently, it can be concluded there is an opportunity to embrace a more robust method of dealing with regional issues and so advance the notion of a truly Asian grouping that can effectively deal with regional issues.

This recent recognition by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir of the need to adopt a robust approach towards the manner of consultation, and so accept the need to comment on another nation's affairs for the regional good, is a watershed. Whilst not embraced in 1998, the global and regional criticism of ASEAN and the ARF for ineffectiveness in dealing with the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis has forced a realisation of the need for a new 'Asian' or 'ASEAN' way. Recognition of the need to accelerate the manner in which regional cooperation is effected and the subsequent employment of a more robust form of 'cooperative security' will provide the ARF with the opportunity to build upon the trust and confidences built during the first two stages of the ARF Plan. It will then empower the ARF to address the regional challenges that need a regional, multilateral focus.

These two strategic challenges are fundamental to effective East Asian multilateralism. Only when the very complex regional leadership issues are resolved and there is a more robust approach to the notion of 'cooperative security', will the ARF been seen as a viable forum in which to resolve regional security challenges. The opportunity exists now to address the systemic weaknesses that have attracted widespread criticism and so provide the opportunity to develop the regional security structure recently envisioned by the Malaysian Prime Minister.

Where To From Here?

The magnitude of the security challenges in East Asia and the challenges to be overcome before an effective multilateral or collective security arrangement can be established are cause for concern. With leadership a defining issue, it appears that ASEAN as an entity, and its original member nations individually, are unwilling in the short term to adopt a more robust approach to regional cooperation. ASEAN in particular, and the ARF, therefore risks a loss of credibility and influence. Change needs to be enacted lest ASEAN be marginalised, and so where to from here?

It appears unlikely an East Asian security arrangement can be established to supplant ASEAN and/or the ARF and in doing so, be effective in dealing with the security challenges in the region. Certainly, South East Asian nations would resist such a move strongly, as would an emergent China looking to re-establish its position in the region and minimise US influence. Time, regional political will and a resistance to non-regional, and particularly Western, influences make this an unlikely proposition.

The ARF is a 'work in progress' and has the potential to be able to represent all interests in the region. The participation of extra-regional powers and nations, with significant regional interests, in the ARF process has the potential to move the Forum further from ASEAN and in doing so, emphasise the sub-regionalism and ineffectiveness of ASEAN. The difference in 'endstates' between the ASEAN Vision 2020 and the ARF highlight this divergent potential. The ARF has the potential to grow to meet regional

needs and has done so quickly as a result of ASEAN's efforts to establish the conditions to make this possible. It will be interesting to see whether ASEAN attempts to draw the ARF back into line with the Vision 2020 as ASEAN quite correctly perceives this divergence, combined with extra-regional involvement, to be to its detriment.

Whilst this occurs, there remains a number of extant fora to address regional issues. The ARF is the most promising, yet APEC has fulfilled an important role in facilitating discussion on East Timor. It is notable the APEC meeting that drew in ASEAN foreign ministers looked quite similar to the ARF. The United Nations remains active and involved in the region, providing the multilateral safety net if all other options to address crises fail.

So, from here, effort needs to be focussed on the ARF, which shows potential notwithstanding the competing regional and extra-regional interests. The success of this venture however depends upon ASEAN's willingness to resolve the leadership dilemma and to adopt a new 'ASEAN' or 'Asian' way to better deal with the challenges faced by the region and to build upon the success to date. If this is unsuccessful, ASEAN and with it the ARF, will be marginalised and the region will lose the opportunity, and perhaps the ability, to achieve the collective influence it sought at its inception.

Conclusion

The trend to regional responsibility for regional issues and recognition, in this post Cold War world, that regional solutions are required is evident in East Asia, and particularly South East Asia. What began in the 'Asian Wars' era of the 1950s and 1960s has developed into ASEAN and most recently, a broadly based and maturing regional security mechanism in the ARF. These bodies, in particular the ARF, show potential to influence regional security matters and hopefully in time, establish a mature mechanism to exercise control over the complex and longstanding enmity between some regional nations. Certainly, significant progress has been made to date but it is clear that much needs to be done to achieve the maturity needed to effect peace and stability in the region through a regional agency such as the ARF.

Major obstacles challenge this hope. The size and complexity of the security challenges in the region are daunting and the ARF remains immature and with questionable levels of influence. ARF leadership, a fundamental component of an effective system, particularly in such a dynamic and tense environment so affected by personalities and egos, remains a vexed issue and perhaps will for some time. Further, the Asian hesitancy to comment adversely on neighbours' actions, the 'ASEAN' or 'Asian' way needs to be overcome before a robust and truly effective security mechanism is established to underwrite regional security.

Much has been done and there is certainly cause for optimism based upon the efforts to date, however only the relatively easy issues have been addressed so far. Moving from consensus to seeking to have member nations ready to accept an impingement upon their sovereignty to ensure regional peace and stability remains a significant issue. The challenge is there; the strength of desire for such arrangements will be a barometer of regional political will and the commitment of extra-regional interests.

6685

ENDNOTES

[1] 'Regionalism' within this paper is defined as that unifying process that brings together nations that are proximate in geography, culture, identity, policy and/or interests in specific issues. This notion of 'regionalism' binds this group of nations together through recognition that individual nations have limited international influence, and that collectively, a group of nations with a common interest will achieve greater impact through collective, or multilateral, action.

[2] R. Craig Nation, "Regional Studies and Global Strategy," unpublished paper (Carlisle Barracks: US Army War College, n.d.), 62.

[3] Rodolfo Severino, "Regionalism: The Stakes for South East Asia," 24 May 1999; available from http://www.aseansec.org/secgen/sg_idss.htm; Internet; accessed 2 December 1999.

[4] Nation, 62.

[5] The 'region' is defined as that area bounded, north-south by Russia and Australia, and east-west, by Myanmar and the Philippines.

[6] The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and then South Vietnam to promote political and economic cooperation. This has widened to include other regional nations and ASEAN has added additional consultative bodies to enhance the benefit from the consultation process. See http://www.aseansec.org.

[7] Robert A. Scalapino, "Asia-Pacific: Looking to the Twenty-first Century," in Preparing America's Foreign Policy for the 21st Century, eds. David L. Boren and Edward J. Perkins (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999),102.

[8] Robert A. Manning, "Defining a New Partnership for the 21st Century," USIA Electronic Journal, Vol.3, No.1,p2, January 1998; available from http://www.usia.gov/journals/itps/0198/ijpe/pj18mann.htm; Internet; accessed 2 December 1999.

[9] National Defence University, 1998 Strategic Assessment (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998), 39.

[10] Rodolfo Severino, "ASEAN Vision 2020: Challenges and Prospects in the New Millennium." 15 March 1999; available from http://www.aseansec.org/summit/vision97.htm; Internet; accessed 2 December 1999.

[11] Leszek Buszynski, SEATO: The Failure of an Alliance Strategy (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990), x. It is worthy to note that the Western assessment was that regional interests paralleled Western hemisphere interests.

[12] Ibid., xi.

[13] Ibid., 50.

[14] Asia Pacific Strategic Studies Centre, "Asia-Pacific Security for the 21st Century," 3 November 1997; available from http://www.apcss.org/Report_Annual_97.html; 3,4; Internet; accessed 21 October 1999.

[15] Buszynski, xi.

[16] FPDA comprises Australia, UK, NZ, Malaysia and Singapore. It is designed to protect the latter two nations with the other members in supporting roles.

[17] Jim Rolfe, Anachronistic Past or Positive Future: New Zealand and the Five Power Defence Arrangements (Wellington NZ: Centre for Strategic Studies, 1995), 3. This arrangement also tied both Malaysia and Singapore at a time when their relations were strained following the separation of Singapore from Malaysia.

[18] Ibid., 6.

[19] David Dewitt, "Common, Comprehensive and Cooperative Security," The Pacific Review, Vol. 7 (No 1, 1994): 1.

[20] Gavin Boyd, "ASEAN Regional Policies," in Region Building in the Pacific, (Elmsford New York: Pergamon Press, 1982),79.

[21] Andrew Mack and Pauline Kerr, "Getting It Right in the Asia-Pacific," The Washington Quarterly (Winter 1995): 134.

[22] Proposed by the then Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in Vladivostok in 1986. This was followed in 1990 by a call from the then Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Gareth Evans for a Conference on Security Cooperation in Asia (CSCA).

[23] Dewitt, 5.

[24] Ibid., 7. Proposed by the former Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Asia Pacific Strategic Studies Centre, 6.

[27] Sukhumbhand Paribatra, "From ASEAN Six to ASEAN Ten: Issues and Prospects," Contemporary Southeast Asia, Vol6, No3, (December 1994): 252-253. Also see ARF Chairman's Statement from 3rd ARF (see ASEAN site at www.asean.org and Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Meetings and Activities (1994-1999), Australian Government Printing Office, 1999. These lists areas where consultation is occurring; Confidence Building Measures, SAR C2, PKO. The value in detailed discussions in Track 2 arrangements is discussed here also.

[28] United States Information Agency, Fact Sheet: U.S., Asia-Pacific Security Alliances 1 January 1998; available from http://www.usia.gov/journals/itps/0198/ijpe/pj18fact.htm; Internet: accessed 17 September 1999.

[29] Severino, "ASEAN Vision 2020: Challenges and Prospects in the New Millennium," 3.

[30] Many are the 'Track 2', or quasi-official arrangements used to precede major meetings and/or effect advancement of current issues and concerns.

[31] United States Information Agency, Fact Sheet: U.S., Asia-Pacific Security Alliances. 1 January 1998.

[32] Ibid.

[33] William S. Cohen, "America's Asia-Pacific Security Strategy," 15 January 1998; available from http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/1998/di1309.html; Internet; accessed 17 September 1999.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Richard McGregor, "10 years old and still undecided," 11 September 1999, available from http://www.news.com.au/news_content/aus/428608.htm; Internet; accessed 11 September 1999. Also see Peter Jennings, Australia and Asia-Pacific Regional Security (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre Paper No 267, 1992), 7.

[37] N. Ganesan, "Taking Stock of Post Cold War Developments in ASEAN," Security Dialogue, (Vol25, No4, 1994): 465.

[38] Paribatra, 235.

[39] Ibid., 256.

[40] Associated Press, "APEC officials begin meeting in NZ," 7 September 1999; available from http://www.news.com.au/news_content/breaking_content/90907.htm; Internet; accessed 7 September 1999.

[41] David R. Gergen, "The Media and International Relations and Foreign Policy," in Preparing America's Foreign Policy for the 21st Century, eds. David L. Boren and Edward J. Perkins (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 281.

[42] Ian J. Storey, "Living with the Colossus: How Southeast Asian Countries Cope with China," Parameters, no.24 (Winter 1999-2000): 116-118.

[43] James A. Boutilier, "Asian Security in an Age of Uncertainty" in Arms Control in the Asia-Pacific Region, eds. Jeffrey A. Larsen and Thomas D. Miller (Colorado Springs: USAF Academy, 1999), 70-71.

[44] Alan Dupont, The Future of the ASEAN Regional Forum: An Australian View, (Working Paper No 321, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, May 1998), 9.

[45] An arrangement that provides the mechanism and supporting structure to address issues that brings regional nations into potential conflict. This can vary from consultative processes through to arrangements for collective military response to internal and external threats to regional peace and stability.

[46] Madeleine Albright, "Challenges Facing US National Interests at Home and Abroad", Despatch, (January-February 1999): 15-18.

[47] Manning, 3. See also United States Information Agency, US Security Strategy For the East Asia-Pacific Region 23 November 1998; available from http://www.usia.gov/regional/ea/easec/easr98.htm; Internet; accessed 17 September 1999, 18.

[48] Storey, 123.

[49] Richard McGregor and Ian Stewart, "Role shift fans regional critics," 27 September 1999; available from http://www.news.com.au/news/aus/4186240.htm; Internet; accessed 27 September 1999.

[50] Storey, 122.

[51] Stanley O. Roth, "Multilateral Approaches to Regional Security", 21 July 1998, presented at the Henry L. Stimson Centre.

[52] Gavin Boyd "Problems in Regional Development", in Region Building in the Pacific, (Elmsford New York: Pergamon Press, 1982), 40-41.

[53] Ian Stewart, "Backflip on Asian security alliance," 3 December 1999; available from http://www.news.com.au/news_content/world_content/4382796.htm; Internet; accessed 3 December 1999.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Dupont, 4,13. The current process remains focussed on non-critical issues associated with the advancement of the first two stages of the three stages of the ASEAN plan. These include consultation on maritime issues, defence college heads meetings, tropical medicine issues and production of defence documents, all second-tier issues not of a critical or region shaping nature in the near term[55].

[56] "ASEAN Vision 2020', 15 December 1997; available at http://www.aseansec.org/summit.vision97.htm; Internet; accessed 2 December 1999.

[57] Nyan Chanda and Shada Islam, "In the Bunker," Far Eastern Economic Review, 6 August 98, p.24.

[58] Dupont, 2-3.

[59] Chanda and Shada, p.24.

[60] "ASEAN; The game goes on," The Economist, 1 August 1998, p.25.

[61] Stewart, 3 December 1999.

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